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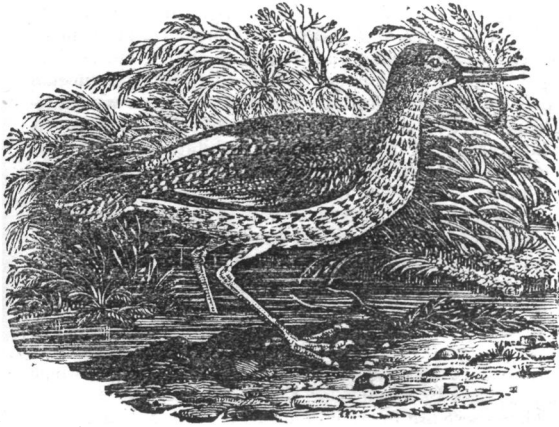
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ORNITHOLOGY.

On some of the Birds frequenting Belfast Lough.

BY JAMES D. MARSHALL, ESQ., M. D.

Of the Genus *Totanus*, or sandpiper, four species have been found in our immediate vicinity, viz:—the redshank sandpiper, green sandpiper, common sandpiper, and green-shank.

REDSHANK SANDPIPER.—(*Totanus Calidris*.)

This delicate, pretty-looking bird, commonly known by the name of redshank, is a constant resident in this part of the country, and except during one or two of the summer months, is always met with on the shores of our bay.

It is one of our commonest species, and any one accustomed to stroll along the shore can scarcely have failed to notice it. Its shrill, piping cry is uttered immediately on taking flight, and the alarm it sounds is so well known to the other species in its vicinity, that the flight becomes general, and the sportsman, with all his caution, is generally outwitted by this wary bird. I have pursued a flock of them for hours round the shores of Island Magee, without being able to approach within gunshot. They collect on the projecting rocky extremities of the small bays, and these are so situated, that the birds cannot fail to notice any attempt made to obtain a nearer inspection of them. There is no lurking place for the fowler, and after following his game from rock to rock, he may be obliged to return fatigued and disappointed.

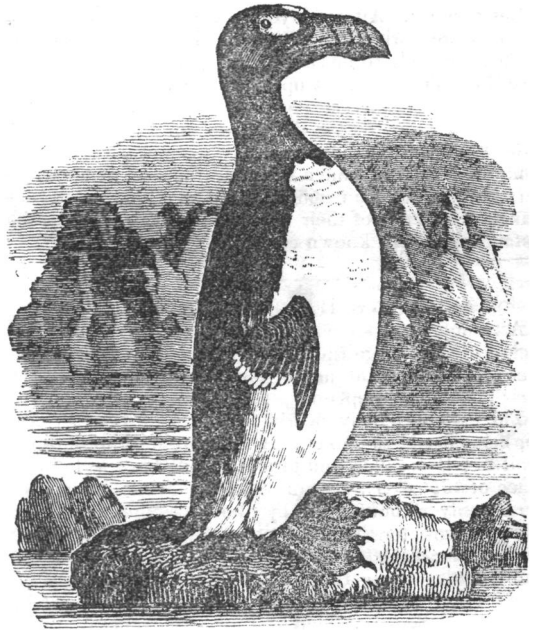
Bewick says, "that the redshank is usually found solitary or in pairs;" and in those places where he had opportunities of observing it, this may be perfectly correct, but I should certainly say, that in all the parts of Ireland where I have observed it, I have almost invariably noticed it in flocks, seldom fewer in number than six, and frequently amounting to one or two hundred.

During winter they congregate in large flocks—in spring they separate into smaller ones, and finally into pairs ere they retire to their breeding haunts. About August, however, they are again found united on the shores, having left their summer retreats in company with their respective families. At this season they are generally much tamer than usual, many of them having been only a few weeks excluded from the shell, and consequently totally unaccustomed to the sight of man.

The difference in the plumage of the old and young birds, although not great, has been such as to induce ornithological writers of no ordinary rank, to class the redshank not only under different species, but even as appertaining to different genera. It has been ranged among the woodcock and snipe, under the name of *Scolopax Calidris*, and in other works, *Tringa Gambetta* and *Tringa Striata*. This is only one of the many instances of subdivision of genera and species resorted to by authors, who either had not the opportunities or inclination to investigate the subject. Statements were taken for granted as correct, merely from want of making the proper inquiries, or bestowing on it the necessary portion of time and labour.

The food of the redshank is the same as that of the other waders, univalve and bivalve mollusca, with worms and insects of various kinds. When in search of food they usually gather round a small pool of water left on the bank by the retiring tide, and wading through it, they pick up whatever attracts their notice.

Though I have mentioned this bird as being extremely wary and difficult of approach, yet it may be brought near by imitating its cry or whistle. I have seen a flock of at least two hundred redshanks, which were so wild as to exclude the possibility of bringing the gun to bear on them, brought within twenty yards of the sportsman in consequence of the correct manner in which he imitated their cry. The call must be repeated, as nearly resembling that of the birds as possible; and when their answer has been returned, the conversation, if I may so term it, must be kept up until they have been brought within the necessary distance.



NORTHERN PENGUIN, OR GAIR-FOWL.—(Le Grand Pinguin.)—Buffon.

The length of this bird, to the end of the toes, is three feet. The bill is black, and four inches and a quarter long; both mandibles are crossed obliquely with several ridges and furrows, which meet at the edges. Two oval-shaped white spots occupy nearly the whole space between the bill and the eyes: the head, back part of the neck, and all the upper parts of the body and wings are covered with short, soft, glossy black feathers, excepting a white stroke across the wings, formed by the tips of the lesser quills: the whole under side of the body is white: the wings are very short, not exceeding four inches and a quarter, from the tips of the longest quill-feathers to the first joint: legs black, short, and placed near the vent.

From the inability of these birds to fly or walk, they are seldom seen out of the water, and it is remarked by seamen, that they never wander beyond soundings. The female lays only one egg, which she deposits and hatches on a ledge close to the sea-mark: it is of a very large size, being about six inches in length, of a white colour, streaked with lines of a purple cast, and blotched with dark rusty spots at the thicker end.

This species is not numerous any where; it inhabits Norway, Iceland, the Ferro Isles, Greenland, and other cold regions of the north, but is seldom seen on the British shores.

At a meeting of the London Zoological Society, held during the last month, Mr. G. Bennett read a note on the habits of the King Penguin *Aptenodytes Patagonica* (Gmel.), as observed by him on various occasions when in high